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#08

COMESA member States welcome COMRAP



Hon. Hope Mwesigye, Minister of Agriculture Uganda with Dr. Muyunda

Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) CEO, Cris Muyunda, has over the last week held discussions on the COMESA Regional Agro-inputs Programme (COMRAP), with the governments of Malawi, Zambia and Uganda.

The countries have all welcomed COMRAP, a two year programme being implemented by ACTESA and funded by the European Union Food Facility Programme. It is designed to respond to the rising food prices phenomenon by increasing agricultural productivity through enhanced access to three intertwined factors namely, finance, fertilizer and seeds.

COMRAP will be implemented through out the COMESA region with a focus on the landlocked countries of Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Ethiopia.

Stakeholders from Malawi emphasized that COMRAP should focus on creating speedy linkages to financial institutions in order to make sustainable financial resources available.

Uganda asked for support for a long term seed strategy, support for bio/organic fertilizers and fertilizer production and support on creating linkages to output commodity markets.

Following the meetings in the countries, ACTESA will hold a COMRAP meeting on 20-21 July 2010 in Lusaka, at which, the following will be discussed:

- (i) The description of the Program;
- (ii) The focus on 8 landlocked countries and what will be done in the non landlocked countries;
- (iii) Introduction of the lead non state actors: EAFF, SACAU, AFSTA, IFDC, MDGC;
- (iv) The draft implementation plans from lead partners and countries;
- (v) The finalisation of the national implementation plans;
- (vi) To ensure the agriculture, gender and trade ministries work together for impact;
- (vii) The clarification of financial mechanisms;
- (viii) The clarification of the project targets and required reporting mechanisms.

ACTESA holds media workshop



The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) held a regional workshop for journalists in collaboration with the Agriculture Council of Tanzania (ACT) from June 30-July 2, 2010.

The three day workshop on 'the role of the media in fostering effective commodity marketing and trade policies,' brought together about sixty journalists from Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Malawi to share practical experiences of reporting agriculture and to discuss technical perspectives on the key policy issues affecting agriculture trade and marketing.

The workshop was held in Dar-es-Salaam, under ACTESA's programme, the African Agriculture Markets Program (AAMP), funded by DFID through the World Bank.

Sessions during the workshop included mock interviews, pitching ideas for stories, creating stories from the presentations and field visits.

Trainers and resource personnel came from ACT, ACTESA/AAMP, the University of Dar-es-Salaam, the World Bank and World Bank Institute, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

The journalists thanked ACTESA for the workshop and listening to their challenges as they report agriculture.

They urged ACTESA to make such workshops a regular feature in its agenda.

In this issue of the newsletter, we feature the official opening story and the best three print stories from the workshop.

The television (won by Judith Akolo from Kenya) and radio (won by Catherine Chisompola from Zambia) clips will be posted on the ACTESA website soon.

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Journalists' regional workshop on agriculture kicks off in Tanzania

The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA)'s regional workshop for journalists held in collaboration with the Agriculture Council of Tanzania (ACT) officially opened on June 30, in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

The three day workshop on 'the role of the media in fostering effective commodity marketing and trade policies,' brought together about sixty journalists from Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Malawi to share practical experiences of reporting agriculture and to discuss technical perspectives on the key policy issues affecting agriculture trade and marketing. The workshop is being held under ACTESA's programme, the African Agriculture Markets Program (AAMP), which is funded by DFID through the World Bank.

The meeting was officially opened by Tanzanian Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Trade and Marketing, Joyce Mapungo, represented by Emmanuel Achayo, Director of Planning in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives. Other dignitaries at the official opening included, ACTESA CEO, Cris Muyunda represented by ACTESA Director of Trade and Markets, Bridget Chilala, Janet Bitegeko, Executive Director of ACT and World Bank representative, Josef Leoning.

In her opening address, Ms. Mapungo, noted that the role of the media as an effective player in modernizing commodity marketing and trade was undervalued.

She said the media had the potential to raise the profile of commodity marketing and trade amongst decision makers and the public.

Ms. Mapungo expressed her concern that journalists had limited specialized training in agricultural commodity marketing and trade.

"Journalism training courses focusing on agriculture do not exist," she said. "By building the capacity of journalists to understand the operations of markets and how their performance is affected by policy decisions, reporters will become more analytical and able to challenge policies."

Ms. Mapungo also urged agricultural experts and the media to dialogue and create avenues for healthy collaboration.

Addressing the meeting, ACTESA CEO, Dr. Muyunda, said AAMP would continue to contribute to regional agricultural market development through knowledge sharing and enhanced partnerships with the media.

"Improved market access by smallholder farmers to domestic, regional and international markets and enhanced trade and private sector participation is vital for agricultural development in our region," he said. "Given the importance of agriculture in the region, it is vital that journalists are part of the vanguard to clearly articulate the key priorities in the sector and to assist in ensuring sustained high level policy focus on the sector."

Dr. Muyunda said ACTESA was determined to raise cooperation in confronting the many challenges in the agricultural markets.

He thanked ACT and ACTESA's partners for their continued support to AAMP and other programs in ACTESA.

ACT Executive Director, Mrs. Bitegeko, told the journalists that their input was vital to the development of the agricultural sector. She said the theme of the meeting was pertinent especially in sub-Saharan Africa where, agriculture is the mainstay of the economies in the region.

Dr. Leoning, from the World Bank highlighted the importance of the role of the media in agricultural development noting that journalists provide crucial information that is needed to fill the information gaps that exist.

A special blog for the workshop has been set up and can be seen at the following address <http://aampjournalism.wordpress.com>.

Small-scale business boom-by Nawa Mutumweno (Zambia)

Despite the lack of infrastructure, Tandale Grain Market in Dar-es-Salaam pulsates with business as hundreds of traders trek there daily to make ends meet.

Millions of shillings exchange hands as the days glide by for various products including maize, beans, sugarcane, potatoes, groundnuts, cassava, avocado, oranges, lemons, to mention but a few.

Activities at the market are anchored on a Leadership Committee headed by Sultan Ali Kiyumbo, who has been at the helm for the past three years. The committee regulates how business is transacted at the market and ensures safety and storage of the various products.

Given that all the minimal developments at the market have been facilitated by the traders themselves with no government support, it is evident that a lot more has to be done to uplift the place to satisfactory operational standards.

The absence of proper water and sanitation at the market is a stark reality with nonexistent water supply and only two toilets for the hordes of people who throng the market each day. Break out of disease is inevitable if nothing is done to change the situation in the near future.

"The government through the local authority should invest in infrastructure development which will lead to more employment creation and business prospects in the long run. As a committee, we are finding it extremely difficult to operate in the absence of proper infrastructure, water and sanitation facilities," Mr. Kiyumbo said.

Pricing at the market is not standardised as the traders in the various commodities lack market information which makes trading uncompetitive. The government and the private sector should partner to come up with an effective and results-oriented market information system that would avail relevant data on commodities at any given time and place, traders who sought anonymity pointed out.

Due to limited finances, the market is unable to expand to accommodate more traders from within the Tanzanian frontiers and beyond, who would like to transact at the market as space is limited.

Effective July 1, 2010, a broad section of the five-member East African Community (EAC) ordinary citizens will enjoy free movement, thus boosting trade.

For many a trader, the market has been a sustainable source of livelihood that has eased the burden in these turbulent economic times.

"Through the business of selling various types of beans, I have managed to build a house for my family," enthused Mustafa, 58. A number of marketeers have managed to send their children to school through their trading activities at the market.

Apart from trading in grains and other commodities, the market also provides value addition services. A case in point is Kadogoo Sembe, who deals in grain milling and flour supply. The company has a simple but efficient milling plant which is providing affordable maize meal and flour.

"We intend to enhance and expand our operations in future when we access some credit. For the past ten years, we have been operating successfully from our own internal financing arrangements which, have helped grow the company to the level it is today," he said.

A quick survey of Tandale market underlines the fact that small scale and informal business is helping put money in the pockets and food on the table of many Tanzanian families.

We need recognition by government-livestock traders, by Mwereti Kanjo (Malawi)

Martias Kingi has been in the livestock business for more than 10 years. Out of it he feeds his two wives and thirteen children. Although he has stayed in the trade for so long, Kingi says profits gained from this continue to dwindle with time.

Kingi sells 120 herds of cattle in a month at Pugu market but has to drive 860 km from his village, Shinyanga just to make ends meet.

"Business is not good. It takes me a week and a half to sell off my herd. I travel twice a month to sell this much. During this time I spend much of my time in a hotel of which, the costs come from the little profits that I make. It is a hustle. One cow is sold for between TS150 000 and 200 000 depending on the size," said Kingi.

According to him, the market has seen a downfall due to the increase in sellers at the markets at the same time the high prices that come in because of increased investment costs.

He however continues to remain in the trade because at the moment it seems to be the only investment in which, one is assured of returns and in cash.

Patrick Mwasambwa, another trader at the market though specialized in goat buying, attributes the challenges in the sector to failure by the government to recognize the traders as investors. He realizes that government cannot do away with all the challenges but points out recognition as a step forward.

"I was promised employment by my government but to date there is nothing. I took it upon myself and went into self employment but still the government refuses to recognize my existence.

I am a Tanzanian but being treated as a refugee while the foreigners with huge investments get all the credit.

"I am paying market levies and the movement fee which has been raised from TS1250 from the TS800 that we were paying just last year. From the little that I make I am expected to pay auxiliary police along the way in fear that they might confiscate my goats. Receipts are not issues from these payments," said 38 year old Mwasambwa.

However when asked whether he and other traders have expressed their grievances to the government, Mwasambwa said the group is lacking a voice. He said every man is on his own and fears to be the first to cast the stone.

On the contrary, a senior government official in the Tanzanian Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development, Jeremiah Temu said traders have been organized into groups as to try and give them independence and a voice.

"As government we have tried to organize the farmers and traders that they can have a say and share information. We have moved from centralized markets to free markets so that the traders are free," said Temu.

Still with minimal recognition, livestock farming is a big part of Tanzania.

Small livestock traders are recorded at 98 percent with 19.2 million cattle, 3.6 million sheep, 1.9 million pigs and 13.7 goats.

The 1900 hectare Pugu market is one of the country's secondary markets where traders come to sell their livestock after they themselves have bought from farmers. It is located 22 km away from Dar es Salaam and receives its livestock from Shinyanga, Dodoma, Tabora, Singida, Mwanza and Tanga. "

By Evelyn Njoroge (Kenya)

It's 10 o'clock in the morning and the 14776 square meters complex that houses fishmongers, and other traders is bustling with activities. It is hot and noisy but that does not seem to bother Hamadi Kijiwe who despite the scorching sun tries to attract the hundreds of potential customers to look at and hopefully purchase his fresh prawns that he's hawking.

Mr. Kijiwe sells between 50 kilograms (kg) and 100 kg of prawns per day which translates to a profit of Tsh100,000 to Tsh300,000 in profit per month. This enables him to take care of his family and educate his two children.

"I started this business back in 2002 after I finished school and I can say it has helped me in many ways. I pay my rent and cater for my other needs from the sale of these prawns," said the 24 year old.

Across the street is Said Abdalla Abdalla, a sea shells dealer. Although their business is mostly pegged on the presence of tourists and the lack of access to credit negatively impacts them, he's glad that he can put his seven children through school.

"Right now, tourists are very few but when its peak season, then business is a bit better," he said in Swahili.

These two traders are just some of the 3,000 people that operate in the Dar es Salam Integrated Fish Market every day to eke a living from the myriad of economic activities such fish preparation, frying and auction that goes on there.

About 16 tonnes of different species of fish are sold per day at the market which in turn translates into about Tsh18 million to Tsh20 million in revenues per month for the facility.

By Evelyn Njoroge (Kenya) (Contd)

together with some imports from Mwanza and as far as Yemen, the fish stocks from the ocean are used to serve the four million residents of the Tanzanian city.

Despite this success, the market's capacity, which is locally known as 'Samaki Ferry' is overstretched. Manager, Bureh Mdoe, said the complex which was built to accommodate 1,000 registered traders now holds 3,000.

"The number of people who come to seek goods and services here is about 12,000 and 15,000 daily, together with the traders who operate here, it means therefore that we are overcrowded," he said adding that this calls for measures to expand it.

The expansion would involve building storied structures that can house more people but this is not part of the facility management's concern for now as such plans would have to be done in collaboration with the Municipal Council.

Also in the works are plans to replace the use of charcoal and firewood in one of the eight zones in the market with briquettes.

This Mr. Mdoe said would not only save on the amount of money spent sourcing and ferrying logs from outside the city into the market for frying fish but would also help protect the environment.

To further play its part in the conservation and protection of the environment, the management said they are assisting in the fight against illegal fishing using dynamite. The Market's Fisheries Officer, Juma Msangi, said although there are between 10 and 20 cases that are reported annually, this figure has come down significantly as their efforts continue to bear fruit.

The use of dynamite in fishing destroys not only the coral reefs but the marine life in such areas.

ACTESA media workshop



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